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Measurement matters

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Using the Internet to measure and enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty was a recent topic in a supportindustry. com Ask the Expert session, led by John Chisholm, CEO of CustomerSat.com.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce and Harvard Business Review, it costs five times more to acquire a new customer than it does to retain an existing customer. Improving customer retention even slightly can increase profits dramatically.

Customer loyalty is a composite of three components: 1) attitude, or satisfaction; 2) retention and 3) advocacy. While attitudes are important, influencing customer behavior towards retention and advocacy is the ultimate goal. And often, satisfaction is the best predictor of future retention and advocacy.

Simply put, customers who are not satisfied are not going to be loyal. Yet before a business can improve performance, performance must first be measured. One way to measure customer satisfaction and loyalty is with a survey.

A well-constructed customer satisfaction survey delivers many different actionable results. What is important is to analyze and identify recurring themes and patterns across different forms of results, and summarize them in a set of overall findings, conclusions, and recommendations on a regular basis.

For organizations using CRM systems, customer satisfaction measurement easily can be automated by installing a "CRM Integration Module" on the system. Every night, this module uploads case numbers, descriptions, customer names, email addresses, and other "variables" describing each case or trouble ticket that closed that day. Business rules ensure the same customers are not surveyed more frequently than, say, once every 60 days. Personalized email invitations to the web survey are then generated. After each customer completes the survey, online results are updated in real-time, allowing managers throughout the organization to address customer concerns and opportunities immediately.

Today, every employee throughout an enterprise, from the customer service representative to the senior manager, can receive the real-time customer feedback that is right for that employee's job. In addition, real-time alerts can notify an appropriate manager immediately if a rating score falls below a threshold level or if a customer wants to be contacted immediately.

Full transcripts of this session, as well as past sessions, can be found at www.supportindustry.com

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